

# Connecticut Commission on Health Equity

## Executive Committee

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**Minutes to the November 20, 2012 Meeting**

Legislative Office Building Room 1B

**Attendance:** Christine Palm, Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Dory McGrath, Janice Gruendel, Sue Tharnish, Brad Plebani, Marie Spivey, Sharon Mierzwa, Arvind Shaw, Kristen Noelle Hatcher, Elizabeth Krause, Glenn Cassis, Werner Oyanadel, Stephanie Paulmeno, Colleen Gallagher

**Call-in:** Stephanie Knutson, Greg Stanton, Marja Hurley

**Not Attending:** Catherine Medina, Marjorie Colebut Jackson, Michael Williams. Paul Cleary, Jim Gatling, Ann Ferris, Cathy Graves, Kelson Etienne Modeste, and Peter Ellis

- Welcome and Introductions.** Commissioner Marie Spivey welcomed members of the Commission and visitors to the meeting. All present stated their names and organizational affiliations. New Commissioners Sue Tharnish (DMHAS) and Janice Gruendel (DCF) were welcomed to the Board. Commissioner Peter Ellis (not present), from Yale Medical School, was also acknowledged. Commissioner Marie Spivey acknowledged the retirement of Commissioner Dory McGrath and her contribution to the Board. Commissioner Janice Gruendel mentioned that she would be willing to share with the board the DCF Strategic Multi-Year Plan that utilizes an RBA Framework. Commissioner Marie Spivey asked for a motion to accept the minutes for the September and May 2012 minutes.
- Committee Reports. Policy Committee:** Commissioner Dory McGrath stated that the Policy Committee will continue to work with state agencies. Commissioner McGrath reviewed the process to date. There was an initial meeting in March 2012 at which time the idea of having a health equity plan was introduced to state agencies. In June 2012 agencies submitted draft statements. CHE then received funding from DMHAS to help agencies to further develop plans. The Policy Committee reconvened state agencies in October 2012. Tamara Petro of MLI made a presentation to state agencies on how consultants will support the process. Tamara will be responsible for assigning consultants to work with each agency. Consultants will contact state agencies directly to understand where they are in the process of developing health equity plans and begin working with agencies to develop plans. Brad Plebani added that state agencies are at very different places and that we will work as hard as we can to get the agencies up to speed as soon as possible. Dr. Raja Staggers-Hakim, Executive Director, added that a meeting was planned

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with the Lt. Governor to gain statewide support of the health equity policy initiative with state agencies. Commissioner Stephanie Paulmeno mentioned that there is a unique opportunity to educate the general public and legislators on health equity and the affordable care act.

**Legislative Committee:** Commissioner Werner Oyanadel provided updates. In November CHE joined LPRAC for an RBA Turn the Curve Session discussing the connection between affordable housing and a wide range of health conditions that affect the Latino Community. Commissioner Oyanadel mentioned that all of the work collected from the session will be sent to the Appropriations Committee in the appropriate RBA Format. Commissioner Werner Oyanadel mentioned the next Turn the Curve Session will be on asthma and is scheduled for December 14<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Oyanadel explained that it is important that at least 10 members of the CHE Board attend this event. Ron Schack of the Charter Oak Group will be the moderator for the event. The Legislative Committee is working with the data committee in selecting the correct indicators for this event. Further, the Legislative Committee has discussed the legislative agenda for 2013 and will advocate for appropriate funding for medical interpretation. The committee still need to determine if this will be done in a breakfast style format or if a press conference will be held. The committee has discussed talking to legislators about Obamacare. The committee will have a fact sheet prepared in advance of the breakfast or press conference. Commissioner Stephanie Paulmeno mentioned a Press Conference would provide far broader reach than a breakfast. Commissioner Oyanadel mentioned that the Legislative Committee will need to meet with the Governor's Office and Jeanette Dejesus in the Office of Healthcare Reform and Innovation. **Data Committee:** Commissioner Sharon Mierzwa provided committee updates. The Data and Legislative Committees have been working in concert on the RBA Turn the Curve Sessions. Commissioner Mierzwa spoke about the incorporation of RBA as an approach to track changes in health disparities. Commissioner Mierzwa mentioned the importance of examining policy changes, changes in services, and costs, and community conditions. Commissioner Mierzwa indicated that the Data Committee is focused on an RBA Approach to determine benchmarks. The Data Committee met on Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> with DPH staff including Commissioner Margaret Hynes and epidemiologists. Commissioner Mierzwa mentioned the release of the DPH Burden of Asthma 2012 Surveillance Report and offered to provide links to the Board. On Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> the Data Committee hosted a data workshop sponsored by The National Partnership for Action called Data Makes a Difference. It was a Data 101 Session for approximately 22 people. Commissioner Janice Gruendel offered to share copies of the second DCF Forum *The First 1000 Days*. **Resource Development:** Commissioner Sylvia Gafford Alexander deferred to Commissioner Glenn Cassis. **Public Voice:** Commissioner Glenn Cassis gave the report for the Public Voice Committee. The Committee met in October and November and revised planned activities. Commissioner Cassis noted that the Torrington Area Workgroup is scheduled to meet on December 12th. Dr. Raja Staggers-Hakim is working on logistics. In April the Public Voice Committee host a session on housing and health. The committee will host other activities over the month of April for Health Disparities Awareness Month. Two major events are the minority women's health retreat weekend and the Health Equity Sabbath. For the Sabbath the Public Voice Committee will work with faith based groups and provide materials in an effort to bring forth messages about health disparities before their respective congregations. The Public Voice Committee is planning for the annual public forums in May. Commissioner Cassis mentioned that these sessions will most likely be held in locations previously not visited by the Commission on Health Equity. The Public Voice Committee worked with Health Justice CT on the Health Equity Town Hall held in October. Dr. Staggers-Hakim offered brief remarks on behalf of the Commission on Health Equity. Commissioner Cassis mentioned Black Men Take Charge of Your Health Day an event through the Hartford Hospital. Commissioner Cassis described the program as a half day program that was very well received. Commissioner Cassis described the CHE upcoming activity, The Women's Retreat, which provides an opportunity for roughly 50 women. The retreat will be held at a campsite. After the retreat the women will be empowered to hold sessions in their own neighborhoods. Further, CHE will provide the participants with some funding. Commissioner Sylvia Gafford-Alexander mentioned that a part-time paid position would support the facilitation

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of this effort and that there are commitments from other state agencies to offer consultants. Commissioner Sylvia Gafford-Alexander has had previous conversations with the YWCA about their involvement. Commissioner Marie Spivey mentioned the Conference of Churches as a possible venue for the Women's Retreat. Commissioner Stephanie Paulmeno added that she would be available to support the Women's Retreat. Commissioner Paulmeno also shared information about the series of Public Hearings that will be hosted by the health insurance exchange called "Healthy Chats" and that she would be attending the session in Stamford. Commissioner Paulmeno also mentioned that the Greenwich Hospital is doing a needs assessment. Commissioner Paulmeno indicated that CHE might consider reaching out to hospitals to discuss these assessments. Commissioner Marie Spivey mentioned that the CT Association of Departments of Health, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), State Department of Health, and CHA, are working on a Community Health Needs Assessment Template that will soon be ready for access and use by healthcare agencies. Commissioner Spivey mentioned that this is a rich tool to support improving health in the State.

3. **Executive Directors Report:** Dr. Raja Staggers-Hakim gave reports on two ad-hoc committees. Dr. Staggers-Hakim indicated that the Bylaws Committee Members will include Commissioners Greg Stanton, Kristen Noelle Hatcher, Brad Plebani, and Stephanie Paulmeno. Dr. Staggers-Hakim indicated that the Bylaws Committee will be responsible for making changes to the current bylaws. Dr. Staggers-Hakim indicated that the Nominations Committee Members will include Commissioners Greg Stanton, Elizabeth Krause, and Stephanie Paulmeno. Dr. Raja Staggers-Hakim gave the timeline for the nominations committee. The request for nominations will be released on November 21<sup>st</sup> and close on December 7<sup>th</sup>. The ballot will be released on December 10<sup>th</sup> and voting will occur on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Staggers-Hakim also mentioned the establishment of two new committees. Based on the recommendations of Senator Toni N. Harp, CHE will establish a Personnel Committee to serve as a body available to work with other human resources agencies in the State. The CHE Executive Committee has agreed to serve in a temporary capacity. Further, a Communications Committee will be established, separate from the Public Voice Committee, to formalize the communications strategy for CHE. Dr. Staggers-Hakim added efforts to work with the Health Insurance Exchange Board. Based on a meeting with Victoria Veltri of the Office of Healthcare Advocate, Commissioners Stephanie Paulmeno, Cathy Graves, and Marie Spivey drafted a letter to be sent to the Health Insurance Exchange Board. Vicki Veltri mentioned that CHE might serve as the Health Equity Expert to the Health Insurance Exchange Board. Further, Dr. Staggers-Hakim has been participating in conversations with staff from the Office of Health Reform and Innovation on preparing a Health Equity Training for the Health Insurance Exchange Bd. Dr. Staggers-Hakim indicated that the health equity analyst position with CHE should be made available in January. Dr. Staggers-Hakim has communicated with Vicki Veltri about space. Vicki Veltri has viewed about 3 or 4 spaces but has not indicated that a decision was reached on a space at this time. Dr. Staggers-Hakim indicated that she and Commissioners Spivey and Plebani are scheduled to meet with Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman regarding the State Agency Health Equity Plans.
4. **New Business.** Commissioner Marie Spivey mentioned a UCHC Research Activity on the potential impact of low birth weight on learning and special education. Commissioner Spivey mentioned that UCHC will be asking the Commissioners of DPH and DDS to provide CHIN Data for a report to the Legislature and for Policy Development.

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5. **Presentation.** CT Academy of Science and Engineering (CASE). Terry Clark, Associate Director, presented on a recent study of CASE on Health Impact Assessments (HIA). CASE is a private non-profit public institution established in 1976 as part of a special act of the General Assembly modeled loosely after the National Academy. CASE has over 300 members that include scientists, engineers, and physicians. CASE provides expert guidance on science and technology to the government and to the people of Connecticut. Terry Clark explained the organizational structure of CASE. The purpose of the health impact of assessment is to provide the General Assembly information to assess the value of health impact assessments in Connecticut. This effort came as a result of conversations with Commissioner Mullen (DPH) and with the encouragement of Representative Elizabeth Ritter as a good topic of study. The scope of work includes an introduction to HIA, tools and methods for conducting HIA, the use of evidence in the development of HIA, HIA on policy development and best practices that can serve as models. Clark mentioned that the research will provide findings and recommendations. Clark explained the research methodology which will include a literature review, interviews, and lectures. The study began in October. In November the first meeting was conducted. A link is available for sharing information from the first meeting. The first meeting included a presentation from the Pew Charitable Trust. The second meeting is scheduled for December 13<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Sharon Mierzwa will be presenting on the Health Equity Index Tool and there will a Presentation Suzanne Condon, Associate Commissioner for Health of the Bureau of Health for Massachusetts. Condon will speak about health laws, the BioMass project, and their checklist for determining which projects are appropriate for the health impact assessment. The study will be complete with publication of the report and a briefing for the general assembly. Information will be sent to the CT Commission on Health Equity and to contacts.

6. **Meeting is adjourned.**